

What is claimed is:

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1. An apparatus for controlling access to information based on content of the information and user identity comprising:
  - a video display that displays the information to be viewable by one or more users;
  - a user-recognition input device that determines whether an additional user is newly present in a given area having access to the display; and
  - a control device coupled to the user-recognition input device and to the video display that selectively controls display of the information based on an output from the user-recognition device.
2. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the user-recognition input device includes a imaging input device, and a feature recognition device operable to distinguish between two or more users based on one or more image features of the users.
3. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the user-recognition input device includes an audio input device, and an audio feature recognition device operable to distinguish when an additional user arrives.
4. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the user-recognition input device includes a movement-detection device operable to distinguish when an additional user arrives.
5. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein a priority is assigned to each user, and the control device selectively controls display based on each user's priority.
6. The apparatus according to claim 1, wherein the control device selects a predetermined channel based on a determination by the user-recognition device.

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7. An apparatus for controlling access to information based on content of the information and user identity comprising:
  - a video display;
  - a user-recognition input device that determines which users are present in a given area having access to the display and provides one or more values that correspond to the identities of the users;
  - a memory containing information that identifies a video content that is being displayed on the video display, and information specifying which users are to be permitted access to that content;
  - a processor that compares a user-identity value from the input device to the memory content specifying which specifies which users are to be permitted access to that content and that produces an access-allowed indication based on that comparison; and
  - a blocking device coupled to the processor that selectively blocks display of the content based on the access-allowed indication.
8. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the video content includes television programming.
9. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the video content includes computer- displayed text or graphics.
10. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the user-recognition input device includes a video input device, and a feature recognition device operable to distinguish between two or more users based on one or more video features of the users.
11. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the user-recognition input device includes an audio input device, and an audio feature recognition device operable to distinguish when an additional user arrives.

12. The apparatus according to claim 7, wherein the user-recognition input device includes a movement-detection device operable to distinguish when an additional user arrives.
13. A method for controlling access to information based on content of the information and user identity comprising the steps of:
  - displaying video information;
  - determining that a user is present in a given area having access to the display of video information;
  - storing information that identifies a video content that is being displayed on the video display, and information specifying which users are to be permitted access to that content;
  - comparing a user-identity value from the input device to the memory content specifying which users are to be permitted access to that content and producing an access-allowed indication based on a permitted access comparison; and
  - selectively controlling display of the content based on the access-allowed indication.
14. The method according to claim 13, wherein the video content includes television programming.
15. The method according to claim 13, wherein the video content includes computer- displayed text or graphics.
16. The method according to claim 13, wherein the step of determining includes acquiring video input, and performing feature recognition to distinguish between two or more users based on one or more video features of the users.

17. The method according to claim 13, wherein the step of determining includes acquiring audio input, and performing feature recognition operable to distinguish when an additional user arrives.
18. The method according to claim 13, wherein the step of determining includes detecting movement to distinguish when an additional user arrives.
19. A method for controlling access to information based on content of the information and user identity comprising the steps of:
  - outputting the information in a form discernable to a user;
  - determining that an additional user is newly present in a given area having access to the output information; and
  - selectively blocking output of the information based on whether the additional user is newly present.
20. The method according to claim 19, wherein the step of determining includes acquiring video input, and performing feature recognition to distinguish between two or more users based on one or more video features of the users.
21. The method according to claim 19, wherein the step of determining includes acquiring audio input, and distinguishing from the audio input when an additional user arrives.
22. The method according to claim 19, wherein the step of determining includes detecting movement to distinguish when an additional user arrives.
23. The method according to claim 19, wherein the step of determining includes determining the identity of a second user who has appeared, and assigning a priority to the second user, and based on the assigned priority of the second user, switching to a channel assigned to the assigned priority of the second user.

24. An apparatus for controlling access to information based on content of the information and user identity comprising:

display means;

user-recognition input means for determining which users are present in a given area having access to the display and for providing one or more values that correspond to the identities of the users;

memory means for storing information that identifies a video content that is being displayed on the video display, and information specifying which users are to be permitted access to that content;

processor means for comparing a user-identity value from the input means to the memory means information specifying which specifies which users are to be permitted access to that content and for producing an access-allowed indication based on that comparison; and

blocking means coupled to the processor for selectively blocking display of the content based on the access-allowed indication.

25. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the video content is television programming.

26. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the video content is computer-displayed text or graphics.

27. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the user-recognition input means includes video input means for obtaining an image, and feature recognition means for distinguishing between two or more users based on one or more video features of the users as contained in the image.

28. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the user-recognition input means includes audio input means for obtaining an audio signal, and audio feature recognition means for distinguishing when an additional user arrives.

29. The apparatus according to claim 24, wherein the user-recognition input means includes movement-detection means for distinguishing when an additional user arrives.

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